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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com)

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“If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Romans 6:9).

*Wis 3:1-9; Rom 6:3-9; John 6:37-40*

In the 1954 movie “On the Waterfront,” dockworker Terry Malloy, played by Marlon Brando, takes on the union mob boss in the final climactic scene that will determine the freedom of all the other dockworkers to work without being subjected to coercion and extortion. Badly beaten, he stumbles toward the doors of the warehouse to lead the others back onto the job. His victory is their victory.

In today’s celebration of All Souls Day, Jesus takes on sin and death to lead all of humanity to the victory of new life. By his own death and resurrection, Jesus becomes the new Adam, the pioneer of our salvation, overcoming original sin and opening the path to the New Creation. Faith in him means embracing his Paschal Mystery, our Exodus and passage from slavery to sin to freedom and new life.

On this vision rests our confidence that physical death does not have the last word, but that we and all our beloved dead are destined for life with God. As the church approaches the end of the liturgical year, many parishes reverence the names of members who have made passage from this world to the next, a litany swelled this year by COVID-19. We affirm that these faithful departed are not lost but with God

and, in a special way, still part of the community, having completed their paschal journeys to new life.

Our union with Christ in baptism reveals the meaning of the Incarnation. By becoming one of us, Jesus took on the full human journey, transforming even the most ordinary of human experiences, all our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, defeats and triumphs, into acts of sacrifice and praise for the gift of life we know in this world. He embraced it all, from birth to death, reclaiming our fallen nature by the power of grace and restoring the image and likeness of God that makes us children of God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus rejoices that he has not lost anything the Father entrusted to him. Everyone united to him will share his victory over death. In his journey to the cross, Jesus took on himself the damage of a broken humanity, all our sins and suffering, and carried them across the threshold of death to new life. His resurrection was more than the miracle of his own return, but also the Good News that he had opened the way for us. His victory is our victory. We mark this somber commemoration seeing the faces and remembering the lives of so many people now missing from our tables, our routine contacts and family events, the webs of relationship that define our world. But even in sorrow, the vividness of their absence is also the promise of reunion, for they are with God, and God is forever here and now.

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